

EMPLOYER BRANDING UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF INDUSTRY 5.0

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БРАНДИРАНЕ НА РАБОТОДАТЕЛЯ В УСЛОВИЯТА НА ИНДУСТРИЯ 5.0

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Abstract

This paper is created to explore the accumulating nuances in the meaning of employer branding, implemented in Industry 5.0 dominated business environment. Narrative literature review, critical analysis and content analysis of selected publications as monographies, scientific/ business articles, conference papers and corporate websites are implemented as research methods here. The identified important nuances and characteristics of Industry 5.0 employer branding are classified and summarized which allowed the grounded formulation of a useful set of managerial questions, requiring timely decision-making in leading business organizations. Directions for future research in the sphere of employer branding under the conditions of Industry 5.0 are also outlined.

Keywords: employer branding, talent management, human resource management, human capital, employee value proposition.

JEL code: J24, M12, M50.

Резюме

Тази статия е създадена, за да се изследват натрупващите се нюанси в значението на брендирането на работодателя, внедрявано в бизнес среда, доминирана от Индустрия 5.0. Като изследователски методи са приложени литературен преглед, критичен анализ и анализ на съдържанието на избрани публикации като монографии, научни/ бизнес статии, доклади от конференции и корпоративни уебсайтове. Идентифицираните важни нюанси и характеристики на брендирането на работодателя в Индустрия 5.0 са класифицирани и обобщени, което позволи обосновано формулиране на полезен набор от управленски въпроси, изискващи навременно вземане на решения във водещите бизнес организации. Очертани са и насоки за бъдещи изследвания в сферата на брендирането на работодателя в условията на Индустрия 5.0.

Ключови думи: брендиране на работодателя, управление на таланта, управление на човешките ресурси, човешки капитал, предложение на стойност към служителите.

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Introduction

The times when the marketing perspective to employment branding dominated inevitably past away under the influence of the continuous changes in the complex, unpredictable and turbulent business environment (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Okafor, Obi-Anike, Ogohi, George, Monyei & Ukpere, 2023), thus stimulating and even frequently forcing the managers to pursue new leadership approaches and methods of management, struggling for an organizational competitive advantage. Now the succeeding contemporary business organizations adopt a multiple and mingled perspective view to employer branding, integrating the fields of marketing, human resource management, talent management, business communications and strategic management (corporate, business or brand management) (Barbulescu, Vasiliuță-Ștefănescu, Stoicov, Coman & Coman, 2024; Nazish, Mehboob, Haider & Khan, 2023; Reis, Sousa & Dionísio, 2021; Maheshwari, Gunesh, Lodorfos & Konstantopoulou, 2017; Gaddam, 2008), implying the implementation of a slight emphasis on the human side of this semantic junction. Furthermore, deliberate theoretical underpinnings are grounded in support of the extensions in the shades of meaning of employer branding, i.e. the theory of psychological contract, the concept of brand equity, signaling theory, literature of organizational ecology and organizational attractiveness construct (Bendaravičienė, 2016). This is the reason why the aim of this paper is to outline some key attributes of employer branding, typical in the forthcoming Industry 5.0 business environment, thus providing the organizational managers with the opportunity of fuller utilization of the employer branding value-adding potential. Narrative literature review, critical analysis and content analysis of selected publications as monographies, scientific/ business articles, conference papers and corporate websites are implemented as research methods here (Ferrari, 2015; Farrukh & Sajjad, 2023; Drisko & Maschi, 2016).

The characteristics of Industry 5.0 business environment

A contemporary view to Industry 5.0 is grounded by Piccarozzi, et al. (2024), holistically defining it as “a revolution... that affects everything around organizations, institutions, and societies”..., “oriented to sustainability”... “in terms of human-centricity, environmental sustainability and resilience”, ... “realized with a strong synergy between creativity of human intervention... and autonomous machines”..., “related to new and old enabling technologies of Industry 4.0”... “to obtain prosperity, efficiency, value and well-being, respecting the boundaries of our Planet”. Kovari (2024) also positions Industry 5.0 as an upgrade to Industry 4.0, bearing in mind the existence of two differences: (a) “rather than replacing humans, Industry 5.0 aims at exploiting the potential of human intelligence in human-machine interaction more than ever before”, and (b) the use of human “cognitive abilities and rapid adaptability” for self-improvement is not realized at the expense of “sacrificing the accuracy and consistency offered by intelligent machines”. In fact the implementation of technologies, associated with Industry 4.0 is not ignored,

as well as the establishment of smart factories, deliberate and consistent pursuits of efficiency improvements, but the emphasis under the conditions of Industry 5.0 is set on re-humanization, equalizing the status of the two sides in the relationship “humans and technology”. Furthermore, since Industry 5.0 is a concept in a process of becoming, the importance of its guiding principles also increases. The current set of the last ones is shown and succinctly described in Table 1.

Table 1: Guiding principles of Industry 5.0

Principles	Description
Human-Machine Collaboration	Intensive interaction between humans and machines. Pursuing synergy from mingling human creativity and cognitive abilities with machine precision and efficiency.
Sustainability orientation	Viewed through the lens of implemented production & service processes. Strong orientation to achievement of climate neutrality, eco-friendly practices and circular economy among other nuances in its meaning. Inclusive growth & some social protection.
Resilience	Strengthening the characteristics of functioning industrial systems as robustness & adaptability in order to overwhelm any type of potential disruptions or deep fluctuations through contingency planning.
Personalization	Strong orientation to mass customization.
Equitability orientation	Value creation for all stakeholders. Deliberate distribution of wealth across global & regional industrial value-adding networks.

Sources: Harrison (2024); Ghobakhloo, et al. (2023), Ivanov (2023); Barata & Kayser (2023).

Such transition in the business environment for sure requires undertaking of certain change management interventions in the interactions and treatment of current and potential contributors (talent) to business organizations, especially in design and realization of employer branding.

Contemporary definitions and emerging key attributes of employer branding in Industry 5.0 circumstances

The veracity, embedded in the starting point of existence for employer branding, provided by Ambler & Barrow (1996) and marked out as a managerial intervention for deliberate creation of a “package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”, has not undergone declines yet. But contemporary business perspective adopts both strategic and process view to employer branding, directly relating it with creation, maintenance and development of a target “company’s reputation as a great place to work” and thought-out shaping of company-related perceptions, experienced by two constituencies as potential candidates and current employees through emphasizing cultural attributes as specific organizational culture characteristics, company values, and employee benefits for the purpose of top talent attraction and employee loyalty building “in a competitive talent market” and after the great resignation (i.e. 2021) through establishing a differentiated employer positioning (Universum, 2025). The academic perspective to employer branding relies on its marketing roots and “quite sophisticated ways”, prioritizes current and potential

employees over consumers and potential customers whose importance seems a bit neglected at first sight in this field (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2020).

Several key factors seem to mark out the current development in the meaning of the concept of employer branding under Industry 5.0 conditions, as follows:

- The easily noticed triple effect of digitalization (Pergelova & Yordanova, 2024; Yordanova, 2024; Wanka, Urbaniak, Oswald & Kolland, 2023; Rita, António & Raminhos, 2025), i.e. (a) the co-existence of the already at least partially digitalized traditional employer branding products and/or services as word-of-mouth, print advertising and diverse industry rankings, and the created new, entirely digital products, services and deliverables, associated with employer branding, as chatbots for candidate support, data analytics of talent behavior and interactive campaigns; (b) data-driven decision-making in the field; and (c) the controversial acceptance of such newness by diverse categories of employees, potential candidates and other stakeholders.
- Changing self-concept of working people – from employees to business organization contributors and humans (Varshney & Varshney, 2024; Pomerance, Converse & Moon, 2021; Abadi, Mahdavi-pour, Rezaei & Nazari, 2021), searching for already created working environments, stimulating creativity, collaboration, and personal development, thus bringing to life the so-called human-centric approach.
- The consequences from the Covid-19 pandemic – viewed as a key marker event, triggering cultural changes, when inevitable manifestations of leadership on crisis management in organizational settings imposed as new norms the dedicated adherence to business purpose, human wellbeing, high engagement, orientation to innovations, adaptability and resilience even under distant working patterns (Sharma, Raj, Gupta, Johri & Asif, 2024; Dimitrov, 2022; 2021).
- The greater penetration of a management paradigm, directing business organizations from traditional human resource management to talent management and people management (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank & Ulrich, 2012; Flach, 2025; Dimitrov, 2015), introducing greater diversity and inclusion in business organizations and whole supply chains.
- The greater inclination to co-creation of employer branding in contemporary companies, relying not only to managers in its design and implementation processes, but also to current and even former employees (employee branding, advocacy), and also other constituencies (e.g. clients, suppliers, etc.) where (digital) storytelling is just one of the possible approaches (Naepae, Ek Styvén & Foster, 2023; Saini, 2023; Lievens, Srivastava & Saini, 2023).
- The sustainable increase in the influence or deliberate managerial stimulation of the socio-collegial aspect at the workplace that inevitably affects the implementation of undertaken employer branding tasks, transferring the emphasis on employee emotional engagement in work, with customers and colleagues at the expense of the organizational entity which status of “a sacred

cow” in this field now seems a bit withdrawn, thus little diminishing the employee attraction to employer promises as “flexible working arrangements, a friendly and informal culture, or strong career development opportunities” (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2020; Bertlett, Johansson & Arvidsson, 2011).

- Considering the consequences of the multigenerational collaborations in the contemporary companies, realized under the conditions of inevitable work-life integration and well-being orientation (i.e. employee happiness, health, and relationships), imposed by managers, trying to harness the power of the new generations of Z and Alfa on the talent market without losing the impetuosity of the elder ones by continuing to “sell them” the positive and unique experience of how it feels to work in a target company (Nagre & Mude, 2024; Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2020; Vieira, Gomes da Costa & Santos, 2024; Wojtaszczyk, et al., 2025).
- The reverberations of the construct of “(organizational) purpose” that still remains a bit blurred and unstable due to the lack of achieved broad consensus around its embedded shades of meaning (Chua, Miska, Mair & Stahl, 2024; Jasinenko & Steuber, 2023; Morrison & Mota, 2023) and the defined as acceptable difference among what managers profess through it as an element of their proclaimed firm culture (Dimitrov, Dimitrov & Slavova, 2024; Dimitrov, Ivanov & Geshkov, 2018), how they act on it in their everyday interventions, and even what narratives the decision-makers design and communicate for tactical reasons in relation with its long-term pursuit, including the sphere of employer branding (Fairfax, 2021; van Ingen et al., 2021; Schein & Schein, 2019; 2016).
- Deliberately closing a bit the gap between the promises, given in the employer value proposition, and the real human experience, (to be) gained in the respective company, providing both tactical managerial advantages to decision-makers and keeping the psychological and physical health of the employees. Culture and key cultural attributes (e.g. organizational values, principles, etc.) still influence to a great extent the performance of contemporary companies in their business environments in spite of penetrating digitalization, automatization and artificial intelligence, although the relationship “culture – emerging technologies” cannot be assessed unequivocally (Yee, Chui, Roberts & Smit, 2025; Bheemaiah & Kuang, 2025; PWC, 2025; Bley, Fredriksen, Skjærvik & Pappas, 2022; Maddula, 2018; Bozkus, 2023; Deep, 2023).

Occasionally the exact term of “employer branding 5.0” may be discovered on the internet, coined by two representatives of the consulting business in the sphere of public relations or corporate affairs, struggling before all for clients. *First*, Nadine Hamburger – a business owner, relying on a book and professional website (Hamburger, 2025; 2019; n.d.) reveals the target construct as possessing the following set of characteristics – purpose-driven, contributing to employee health

and wellbeing, supporting sustainability, prioritizing authenticity, integrity, (self-)empowerment and its measurability, providing an opportunity of both constituencies – employer (i.e. entrepreneurs or managers) and employees, mutually to assess their potential fit, based on triple bottom-line – skills, compensation package and target cultural attributes (e.g. purpose, values, cultural characteristics).

Second, Angélica Gómez - a corporate director of culture and people (Gómez, 2022; Atrevia, n.d.a; n.d.b), based on a journal article, interviews and corporate newsletter, depicts employer branding 5.0 as a set of pillars the business organizations should adhere to, as follows: (1) purpose, emphasizing its societal impact; (2) genuineness (authenticity) – trustworthiness should trump marketing narratives; (3) segmentation, e.g. continuously and creatively (re-)identifying and (re-)categorizing of audiences (constituencies); (4) corporate empathy, e.g. listening and understanding (potential) employee feelings, expectations, needs and necessities; and (5) co-creation of the employment brand by employers and employees as experience and change initiatives.

As it may be inferred, the last two analyzed descriptions of employer branding 5.0 are widely impacted by the aforementioned factors, but to a differing extent, based on authors' dominating assumptions about the core essence of employer branding 5.0, guiding orientation to mindset shifts versus project implementations; emphasizing emotions and empathy versus structure and clarity; strategic versus tactical participation of the selected constituencies, accepted levels of contextualization. But it should be also mentioned that both professional points of view to employer branding 5.0 represent applicable models behind a paywall (e.g. services to be sold and bought) which prevents from gaining further access to necessary information in order to perform deeper familiarizations, comparisons and critical analyses between the two theories and related frameworks.

Managerial questions, raising in the heads of organizational decision-makers, regarding employer branding under Industry 5.0

Logically, the already performed analysis implies that design and implementation of employer branding under Industry 5.0 dominated business environment is inherently related to making timely managerial decisions that should be put into action, regarding at least three important spheres as *strategic and cultural alignment, internal and external communication and engagement, and technology and talent integration*.

The first sphere – of strategic and cultural alignment, encompasses posing and finding appropriate answers to several management questions as: “In what ways do organizational managers embed the principles of Industry 5.0, e.g. human-machine collaboration, sustainability inclination, resilience, personalization and equitability orientation – into the essence and structure of the created employer brand?”, “What are the core cultural attributes (e.g. formulated cultural characteristics, (company) values, purpose, vision, and other elements of proclaimed firm culture) a target business organization should adopt and integrate in its employer brand in order to

differentiate itself as a preferred employer in human-centered business climate?”, “How should these official company documents be formulated and structured?”, “How should corporate managers behave in order to successfully transpose their strategic intentions in the field of employer branding in daily activities in a due course?”, “What change-oriented interventions, regarding their employer brand, do managers have to undertake in order not only to support wholeheartedly the simultaneous prioritization of advanced technology and meaningful human engagement, imposed by Industry 5.0 dominated business environment, but also to differentiate from their competitors and other key constituencies?”, and “How to align the pursued employer brand strategy with the corporate talent management strategy, and the overall business development strategy of the company?”.

The second sphere - internal and external communication of the employer brand and the engagement of key constituencies with it, also brings forth several important questions as: “Should more constituencies – beyond employers (managers) and employees, be involved in the process of design and/or implementation of the target employer brand? Which exactly? For what reasons?”, “What is the dominating attitude in the company to co-creation practices in the sphere of employer branding”, “What do company managers mean by target stakeholders participation in employer branding co-creation process?”, “Do corporate managers rely only on voluntary contributions of stakeholders to employer brand development without controlling them?”, “How does the company motivate diverse constituencies, deliberately engaged in employer branding for the entity?”, “What is the right approach/ size for segmentation of audiences for the target company, regarding employer branding in Industry 5.0 competitive landscape, ensuring adequate system organization and alignment of applied proclaimed firm culture elements?”, “Does the company operate an established and continuously elaborated system of authenticity and real impacts measurement for employer branding activities in Industry 5.0 business environment?”, “Do managers orchestrate the use of the full array of communication channels for employer branding to convey a unique employer value proposition to diverse audiences (for example: all the generations at the workplace, holistic talent view – potential, current and former employees), calibrating the right mix of utilized digital platforms, storytelling techniques, and traditional approaches?”, and “Provided the established adequate levels of monetary remuneration in the company, what strategical moves can managers apply in order to retain high-performing employees and contributors, seeking also meaningful work and shared values?”.

The third sphere - technology and talent integration – not collision, justifies the posing of another group of interrelated questions as “Does the company have a shared vision for human-machine collaboration?”, “How is such vision effectively communicated to diverse stakeholders as a key component of the cherished organizational identity?”, “In what way is the cherished organizational reputation as a forward-thinking and supportive employer supported by means of planning for

employee upskilling and reskilling programs or investments?”, “How can the company utilize modern technologies in the human resource field to strengthen human tracks in the process of employer brand management and communication?”, and “How to find and establish the right balance between the active use of advanced technologies and the desired satisfaction of the need to foster a supportive and empowering culture in the business organization?”.

Conclusion

The construct of employer branding under the conditions of Industry 5.0 is still in the process of becoming that is evidenced by its lack of stability in applied labels and existence of few useful definitions for it. That is why, based on the applied research methods, several key factors, characterizing its recent development, are identified, and managerial questions are raised in three spheres as strategic and cultural alignment, internal and external communication and engagement, and technology and talent integration. In this way a rich bundle of directions for future research in the sphere of employer branding under the conditions of Industry 5.0 may also be outlined as: (1) further exploring its emergence, development and implementation context not only in developed countries and leading companies, but also all over the world and even in business organizations, struggling for their survival; (2) the research object perspective may be enriched by demonstrating research interest to employer branding not only in business organizations, but also in specific units from the state administration (e.g. the military, universities) and the non-governmental organizations; (3) entities from more sectors of the economy should be surveyed in order to outline the context specificity of current employer branding practices, make comparisons, and identify meaningful relationships; (4) empirical surveys and representative samples of (business) organizations are needed, so conclusions and recommendations may matter to all the entities from certain industries; (5) studying the change management process, related with the contemporary employer branding.

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